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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD
LONDON FOR ERELI
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OIIP KMDR TC
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: EXECUTION OF SADDAM

¶1. Summary: Numerous UAE columnists and op-ed writers voiced their
anger over the timing of Saddam's execution and accused the U.S. of
igniting the fire of sectarianism between Sunnis and Shiites. End
Summary.

¶2. under the headline "Iraq First", Sharjah-based pan-Arab daily
"Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000) editorialized on 1/3:

"If Saddam was executed as a result of a popular revolution or an
internal coup, its impact on the Iraqis, Arabs, Muslims and the
entire world would have been easier than under an occupation
administration that controls everything... The tragedy and the
humiliation took place on the day of sacrifice, which was not an
Iraqi choice. The execution was meant to take place in 2006 to
cover for American defeats in Iraqi in 2006. We do not defend
Saddam and his crimes against his own people and neighbors. Those
crimes were not secret to the Washington that blessed them or at
least remained silent towards them. Was not Saddam its major ally
in the past? Nonetheless, all Iraqis are required to forget their
differences and rebuild Iraq. Iraq was before Saddam and will
remain after him and the only way for Iraq to restore its health is
through tolerance, and the condemnation of sectarianism that has
only flourished under the American occupation."

¶4. Under the headline "Saddam Execution, a feast of revenge in
Baghdad" Muhammad Al-Hammadi wrote in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic
semi-official daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"Many Iraqis Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Christians and others denounced
the timing of the execution... Like most neutral Arabs, we have
never been with Saddam and will never be with him. However, if we
consider Saddam's execution the beginning of new Iraq, this is
undoubtedly a retaliatory beginning which is not too far from
Saddam's beginning thirty years ago. We cannot say that the
execution which was approved by the Shiite authority was free from
ideological calculations and personal revenge. The new leaders of
Iraq and the Maleki administration will realize that they committed
an endless mistakes starting with their arrival on American tanks
and ending with the timing of the execution. There is no doubt that
the rulers of Iraq do not want to hear opinions that contradict with
theirs. Anyone who opposes them is either a sectarian Sunni, an
Arab nationalist, or a Muslim terrorist. The suspicious timing
urged moderate Arabs to criticize the Iraqi government, and with a
dumb decision they turned Saddam from an absolute evil into a martyr
and an absolute national hero. Instead of closing Saddam's file,

the file will remain open for ever."

¶5. Muhammad Al-Sawafi wrote in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic semi-official
daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"What happened on the early hours of the Eid Al-Adha (Feast of
Sacrifice) will help to create a new generation in the region that
sympathize with the former Iraqi regime. The way the execution took
place and its timing and the attendance which was limited only to
Shiites and some of the phrases heard during the execution urges all
Sunnis to sympathize with Saddam and not those who came to implement
justice, whether the American or the Shiites. No one can defend the
American policy and say that it does not ignite the fire of
sectarianism in Iraq."

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